

Green Country Veteran

A JACK C. MONTGOMERY VA MEDICAL CENTER MAGAZINE

ISSUE 02 | SPRING 2013

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in Annual Creative
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EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century



Army Veteran Travis Burdess poses with his entry in the 2013 Veterans Creative Arts Competition. Read about the competition on pg. 10.

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Green Country Veteran

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National Salute to Veteran Patients

Story by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

Photo by Christopher Beshears, Visual Information Specialist

For the third consecutive year, the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC) and sponsors treated Veterans and the local community to a free VAleNTines for Veterans Concert.

Country music artist Aaron Tippin entertained an estimated 1,400 people at the Muskogee Civic Center on Feb. 14 and performed hit songs such as “You’ve Got to Stand for Something,” “There Ain’t Nothin’ Wrong With the Radio,” “Where the Stars and Stripes and the Eagle Fly” and “Kiss This.”

The concert was one of 17 concerts that were held by VA medical centers nationwide as part of VA’s annual National Salute to Veteran Patients, which is designed to pay tribute and express appreciation to Veterans.

During the performance, Tippin paused to thank Veterans for their service and for buying his music throughout the years.

“There’s a lot of Vets here tonight,” said Tippin. “We appreciate you. I’m very proud to say that I started my career entertaining you. You’ve been my first fans in the music business and I can’t thank you enough.”

Marine Corps Veteran J.R. Coleman, who served 27 months in Vietnam with the 3rd Battalion of the 7th Marine Corps Division, attended the concert and said he was grateful to VA for hosting it.

“I think it’s great,” said Coleman. “We didn’t get this when I came home, so I wanted to

Aaron Tippin performs for Veterans during the 2013 VAleNTines for Veterans Concert.



come down and listen to the country music and see if there's anybody who was in my outfit."

Navy Veteran Eugene Barringer, who served in Vietnam, said he also enjoyed Tippin's performance.

"I thought it was outstanding," said Barringer. "Aaron Tippin is a great singer. I enjoyed the whole concert."

National Salute is an opportunity to increase community awareness of VA's role in providing comprehensive medical care to the nation's Veterans, encourage citizens to visit hospitalized Veterans and to become involved as volunteers.

Throughout the week, members of the local community visited Veteran patients at the medical center to thank them for their service. Visitors included: Boy Scouts Troop 627 (Wagoner), Broken Arrow High School Football team, Muskogee High School Football team, and members from Timothy Baptist Church.

JCMVAMC Director James Floyd said the National Salute to Veteran Patients is an important opportunity for the public to express their gratitude to Veterans.

"It's our chance to share some time with our Veterans, listen to their stories and thank them," said Floyd. "Because they have much to teach us and we have much to be very thankful for." ★

Serve Our Veterans as a Volunteer

The National Salute to Veteran Patients encourages citizens to become involved as volunteers. JCMVAMC has more than 400 volunteers who provide many important functions throughout the medical center and at our Hartshorne, Tulsa and Vinita Outpatient Clinics and help make our patients' stay more enjoyable. Volunteers can perform a number of services, and a volunteer's talents are closely matched with one of our many assignments. To volunteer, contact the Voluntary Service Office at 918-577-3621/3622/3358. They will be happy to discuss how you can help us in our mission to provide comfort and care to our Veterans.

Thank You to Our Sponsors

The concert was organized by Voluntary Service and made possible by the generous support of the Muskogee Civic Center, Muskogee County Sheriff's Office, American Legion Auxiliary, Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, Disabled American Veterans of Oklahoma, Fairfield Inn & Suites Muskogee, Muskogee County Transit, Arrowhead Mall of Muskogee, OKIE Country 101.7 FM and Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame.

JCMVAMC Now Offers E-Donate to Support Local Veterans

The Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center is now offering E-Donate, an online donation option at www.muskogee.va.gov/giving/, which will provide community members who wish to give back to Veterans a simple and safe way to pledge their support to the fund of their choice.

"We've known for years that our citizens want to show their support to the service members who defended their freedoms," said James Floyd, JCMVAMC Director. "While not everyone will have the time to volunteer, now anyone can take five minutes online to thank Veterans in any number of ways."

The E-Donate option allows donors to select from a number of funds at the medical center such as social services, transportation, outreach to recently returning and homeless Veterans, and towards buying books, coffee and comfort items for our inpatient Veterans. VA administrative costs are appropriated, so donors can be sure 100 percent of their donations go to the funds they select and the Veteran patients they are choosing to support.

The actual donation is made through a secure site at the Department of Treasury's www.pay.gov. A minimum of \$5 is required for an online donation.

For more information, please contact Greg Sorenson, chief of Voluntary Service, at 918-577-3621.



E-Donate



Air Force Veteran Will Simmons (left) speaks with JCMVAMC recruiter Jeanette Hester.



Susan Hartsell, JCMVAMC Women Veterans Program Manager, explains VA benefits to Army Veteran Karen Ritter.

More than 220 Veterans Attend

Story & Photos by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

On Feb. 7, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and other local organizations combined their efforts to host the 2013 Eastern Oklahoma Veteran & Military Hiring Fair & Business Opportunity Summit, which was held at the Muskogee Civic Center and included more than 80 local employers.

The primary purpose of the hiring fair was to assist Veterans and military personnel in obtaining gainful employment and to inform Veteran and military business owners of available resources and opportunities, such as federal Contracts, Loans and Grants.

Throughout the day, Veterans had the opportunity to attend workshops and learn how to develop a resume, apply for a federal job and learn about benefits for Veterans.

Staff from the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC) also attended the hiring fair and educated Veterans about VA's careers, benefits and health care. Representatives also enrolled Veterans for My HealtheVet, VA's award winning e-health website, and provided free flu shots to enrolled Veterans. JCMVAMC's Veterans Transportation Service provided free transportation to the hiring fair from the Muskogee hospital and Ernest Childers VA Outpatient Clinic in Tulsa.

More than 220 Veterans attended the one-day event including Air Force Veteran Will Simmons, who served as an Aircraft Maintenance Officer for 11 years and achieved the rank of Major.

This event was set up especially for Veterans ... I've seen lots of good opportunities.

After completing his military service, Simmons decided to go back to school and he earned a master's degree in Business Administration from Northeastern State University in December 2012.



The Muskogee Civic Center hosted the Veterans Hiring Fair.



Todd Johnson, JCMVAMC My HealtheVet Coordinator, enrolls Navy Veteran Ron Pickler (left) for My HealtheVet, VA's award-winning e-health website.

Veterans Hiring Fair in Muskogee

Hoping to begin a new career in leadership management, Simmons drove from his home in Sallisaw to meet with potential employers.

"I just graduated, so I'm back in the workforce," said Simmons. "This event was set up especially for Veterans, so it sounded like my kind of deal. I came out here to see what they have and so far I've seen lots of good opportunities."

At the beginning of the day, Simmons set a goal of meeting every hiring manager and his hard work paid off. By the end of the day, he had received several job offers.

"I wanted to come here and look my best and see what was available out there," said Simmons. "I'm so glad I did, because things have really worked out. I've gotten a couple of offers today

and I'm really excited about the opportunities and I'm really glad that I came."

He also noticed that other Veterans were achieving success at the hiring fair.

"I see a lot of hiring going on and a lot of applications being filled out and that's exciting," he said.

Army Veteran Karen Ritter also attended the Veterans Hiring Fair and drove from her home in Tahlequah. It was the first hiring fair she had ever attended and she hoped to find a job as either a secretary or paralegal.

"I need a job," said Ritter. "I've applied for two different jobs so far. Maybe I'll have some luck." ★

The 2013 Eastern Oklahoma Veteran & Military Hiring Fair & Business Opportunity Summit was sponsored by Workforce Oklahoma, Oklahoma Small Business Development Centers, Military Order Of The Purple Heart, Department of Veterans Affairs, Northeastern State University, Connors State College, Eastern Workforce Investment Board, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, Greater Muskogee Area Chamber of Commerce and the City of Muskogee.

Liberty House,

VA Grant Giving Homeless Veterans Second Chance

Story & Photo by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

Since 2007, Restoring Lives, a 501(c) 3 faith-based recovery/re-integration program in Tulsa, has helped the homeless get off the streets and recover from drug and alcohol addiction.

When Restoring Lives Program Director Dustan Evans learned about the VA's Grant and Per Diem Program a few years ago, the non-profit developed a new vision to expand its services and create a new program specifically for homeless Veterans.

Evans and other Restoring Lives' staff traveled to Memphis in January 2010 to attend a VA grant writing workshop, which provided them with detailed instruction on how to successfully apply for a federal grant.

Next, the organization began searching for a new facility that would allow them to house homeless Veterans. The organization was able to purchase an empty warehouse directly next door to their facility, which had to be completely refurbished and renovated.

On Jan. 8, 2013, Evans received news that the VA Grant and Per Diem Program had approved an eight-year grant for Liberty House and the new transitional living facility with 25 beds could begin accepting homeless Veterans as residents.

"Seeing Veterans sleep on the streets, it tears me up," said Evans, an Army

Veteran. "It really does. We've been thrilled to open and just dying to get open."

More Than a Bed – Liberty House Offers a Second Chance

For up to two years, Veterans who are coming out of the prison system or Veterans in recovery from alcohol and drug use and have a desire for recovery, can reside at Liberty House.

Along with safe housing, Liberty House offers a highly-structured and

Seeing Veterans sleep on the streets, it tears me up. It really does.

individualized program that includes meals, substance abuse and trauma treatment, case management, nutrition, job training and financial planning.

Each week, staff, including a licensed drug and alcohol counselor and licensed behavioral health professional, will lead group classes aimed at helping Veterans learn skills necessary

to be self-sufficient during their stay to help promote a smooth transition back into permanent housing.

In addition, VA staff from the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC) Homeless Program work closely with Liberty House and provide case management services for homeless Veterans.

While Veterans can stay at the facility for two years, the goal of the program is to help Veterans reintegrate back into society within six months to a year. Program staff develop a transitional plan for each Veteran with the goal of having the Veteran enroll in school or helping them find employment.

Evans said eligible Veterans will also attend first-time home buyers' courses to assist them in owning a home. For Veterans who are not eligible for the courses, Liberty House will help them obtain a housing voucher through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program.

Staff will also help Veterans who are unemployable file for Social Security Disability Insurance within the first three months or assist them in getting in VA benefits if they're eligible.

"Some of the Veterans that do need to stay here for two years, we'd like them

Army Veteran Harold Wheatley moved into Liberty House on Jan. 18 and hopes the program will help him reintegrate back into society.



to,” said Evans. “But the average is six months to a year.”

While the Veterans stay at Liberty House, they will not be required to pay anything to live there. Instead, they will be required to open a savings account, which the facility will monitor on a monthly basis.

“Instead of having them pay us, we’re having them pay themselves,” said Evans. “A lot of facilities charge, because they find it to be a responsibility of the Veteran to teach them to integrate into society by paying a bill. I’m not asking the Veterans to pay us anything out of their pocket.”

Army Veteran Feels Grateful to Live at Liberty House

A combination of factors led Tulsa resident Harold Wheatley to become homeless in 2009.

After leaving the Army in the early

1990s, Wheatley worked for a company in Tulsa as a computer numerically controlled machinist. But he lost the job and his marriage due to his drinking and other health problems.

“I had a lot of problems stemming from things that happened to me that I don’t really like to talk about much, but I don’t blame (my wife) for divorcing me,” said Wheatley. “I’d wake up in the middle of the night pounding and screaming. I had night terrors and I take medication for that which helps.”

After becoming homeless, Wheatley got connected with the JCMVAMC Homeless Program and Social Worker Christina Perez-Lanik told Wheatley about Liberty House and asked him if he’d like to stay at the new facility.

“I said I would be very foolish to turn that down, because I really had no place to go,” said Wheatley.

On Jan. 18, Wheatley was the second homeless Veteran to move into the facility. He hopes Liberty House will

help him get a handle on his drinking and help him reintegrate back into society.

“I want to get myself together” he said. “When I came out of the service, I was drinking very heavily and I want to get a handle on that so I can put the pieces of my life back together and be back in the community and be a productive citizen again. This seems to be a great place to do that.”

Wheatley said he is impressed with Liberty House and feels grateful for the chance to live there.

“The facility is fantastic,” he said. “Everything is new and there’s plenty of food. I’m getting all the help that I need. This place has truly been a blessing so far.”

For more information about Liberty House, please contact 918-445-2920. The facility is located at 3314 W. 61st St. in Tulsa. ★

Veterans Display Artistic Talents

Story and Photos by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

In his spare time, Army Veteran Travis Burdess enjoys recreating 16th century jewelry pieces using only techniques and tools that would have existed during that time period.

The Tulsa resident works with a hammer, anvil and bucking wheel in his garage and gradually shapes jewelry, such as bracelets, into shape.

“You start beating on a piece of metal until you find something that you like,” said Burdess. “When you’re done, it’s something pretty that people can look at. Most people are just amazed that I did that with strictly a hammer and nothing more. No machinery.”

During Jan. 28-29, Burdess was one of 13 Veterans who displayed their artistic abilities for the public during the medical center’s annual Veterans Creative Arts Competition.

Each year, VA medical centers around the nation hold a competition which VA uses as one form of rehabilitative treatment to help Veterans recover from and cope with physical and emotional disabilities.

The competition includes more than 53 art categories that range from oil painting to leatherwork and even paint-by-number kits. In addition, there are 120 categories pertaining to all aspects of music, dance, drama and creative writing.

A national selection committee chooses first, second and third place winners among all of the entries. Select winners will be invited to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, which will be held Oct. 21 - 27 in Reno, Nev.

Burdess competed in the competition for the first time this year and entered a pure silver bracelet he made for his daughter. He hopes the bracelet will earn him an invitation to the national festival.

“Going to Reno and having people from all over the country see my work would be nice,” said Burdess. “Everyone likes a little pat on the back every once in a while I guess.”

However, Burdess doesn’t do art for the recognition. He said it is an outlet that helps him to forget problems he might be going through at any given time.

“It’s therapeutic in the sense that I get to kind of lose myself in it,” said Burdess. “I don’t have to think about other stuff that’s going on.”

Burdess was one of four Veterans who participated in the competition for the first time this year. Air Force Veteran Steve Powers also participated for the first time and entered a cell phone case he made out of a baseball.



Army Veteran Travis Burdess



Vietnam Veteran Bob Rosenburgh



Army Veteran Phillip Duncan

"A friend of mine had a bunch of baseball parts and he asked me if I could figure out something to do with them," said Powers. "One night it finally dawned on me, 'I think I can make cell phone cases out of these.'"

Powers has made hundreds of cell phone cases out of used baseballs and he enjoys giving them away for free.

Like Burdess, Powers found out about the competition from his VA doctor who also encouraged him to attend the Veterans Open Art Studio/Writing Workshop, which is held on Mondays in the auditorium from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

"My doctor recommended it because I don't have anything to do," said Powers. "So he said 'why don't you try going to the (open art studio) classes on Monday. They're pretty cool. You get to sit around with other Veterans who have the same problems that you have.'"

The Veterans Open Art Studio/Writing Workshop is intended to be a therapeutic environment for Veterans who are dealing with various health issues. Veterans can write short stories and poems or work on art that interests them.

"This is a time for them to not only work on their leisure interests, but also a time to share with each other issues that are going on," said Deborah Moreno, a recreation therapist and the Creative Arts Program Manager. "They can also learn ways of keeping their hands busy and minds occupied and not be focused so much on their pain or depression and focus more on functional activities."

Vietnam Veteran Bob Rosenburgh, who competed in the creative arts competition for the second time this year, regularly attends the open art studio. He said the group is about more than just art, it's an opportunity to socialize with others who served.

"I like the camaraderie with the other

Veterans," he said. "In my socializing outside of the VA, there's not many Veterans. So there's not commonality of background, thought or experiences. When I come up here, I feel like I'm back home."

Veterans Combine Talents during Open Art Studio

Friendships formed during the open art studio led Rosenburgh and four other Veterans to form a partnership and complete a group project for the creative arts competition.

In the fall, he was joined by Vietnam Veterans Truck Morning and Don Johnson and Army Veterans Kenneth Brown and Connie Lockwood who began working on portraits of George Washington which they combined into a single piece of art.

Each Veteran took the artwork home and drew an individual portrait of Washington featuring different colors and styles.

Rosenburgh hopes the group project will earn him and the other group members an invitation to the national festival.

"The group is already excellent therapy and this kind of brought us closer together in terms of creativity and friendship and sharing the joint project here," said Rosenburgh. "Plus we all want to go to Reno."

More than 3,000 Veterans are expected to submit entries in this year's national competition and approximately 120 Veterans will be selected to attend the national festival.

Rosenburgh, who finished second place nationally last year in the acrylic painting category but wasn't selected to attend the festival, knows the competition is tough.

"I'll be lucky to place this year, because these (Veterans) are good," he said. "When you're in a competition, you don't want to just walk away with all the prizes. You want to have some real talent to compete against."

Female Veteran Hopes to Follow in Husband's Footsteps

In 2008, Army Veteran Connie Lockwood was one of more than 120 Veterans who were invited to attend the National Creative Arts Festival in Riverside, Calif.

Since then, Lockwood has been a strong advocate for VA's Creative Arts Program and said his experience at the national festival helped save his life. Lockwood credits art with helping him cope with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

After hearing so many positive stories about the national festival, Lockwood's wife Wanda, who is also an Army Veteran, has been trying to earn an invitation to the festival.

"He was so pumped up about it and he still is," said Wanda. "I would really like to see what it's like and what it's all about. I would really like to go."

Lockwood submitted several entries in this year's competition including a headdress she was inspired to make after attending a local Renaissance festival last May.

"I thought, 'I bet I can make that,'" she said. "So that's what I did. I figured it out and put it together."

Wanda has been creating art since she was eight years old and it remains a life-long passion.

"I really enjoy art because it gives me an outlet to make something beautiful," she said. "It astounds me sometimes what I can do. It astounds me what

other people can do. It's wonderful."

Moreno said the creative arts program is making a positive impact in the lives of Veterans.

"It's a way for them to express themselves," she said. "I've seen it make a change in their lives. It helps the Veterans feel like they belong. They have a group that they belong to that understands what they've been through, what they've dealt with and how they're feeling."

A total of 25 Veterans participated in the competition and submitted a combined 39 entries, which was a significant increase from 2012 when 13 Veterans submitted a combined 29 entries. Moreno also said she was thrilled with the increase in participation this year and hopes even more Veterans will participate next year.

"There were so many participants this year and I appreciate all of the people who helped get the word out about the competition," said Moreno. "I would like to see this program continue to grow and offer the opportunity for the Veterans to express themselves through the arts." ★



Army Veteran Floyd Henderson



Army Veteran Wanda Lockwood



Army Veteran Kenneth Brown

Army Veteran Has Art on Display in Tulsa Gallery

Like most Veterans who participate in the creative arts competition, Army Veteran Kenneth Brown has been drawing his entire life – mostly with #2 pencils.

He enjoys taking photographs of old houses and barns and then drawing a picture of the object to make it look as realistic as possible.

"Every picture tells a story, so I try to keep my work as close to the truth as possible," said Brown, who lives in Tulsa.

Along with having his art on display in a museum in Catskill, Mo., he also has his work on display in the Ariana Jakub Art Gallery in Tulsa. The gallery even featured Brown's work in an exhibit from March 9 to April 6.

Brown said having his art on display in Tulsa was a great feeling and hopes his art will be displayed in other galleries across the U.S. someday.

"It means I'm on the right path," said Brown. "This is just another step in the process of sharing my art with the world."

Brown said the creative arts competition and socializing with other Veteran artists during the Veterans Open Art Studio has helped him gain confidence in his art.

More importantly however, he said art is an outlet that helps him deal with physical pain.

"Art has helped me to overcome the pain that shoots through my body," said Brown. "It helps me to relax." ★

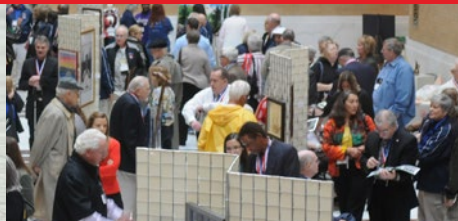


Get in the Game

With VA Adaptive Sports

Throughout the year, Veterans who receive their health care through VA can participate in creative arts competitions and sports clinics. VA sponsors a National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, National Veterans Golden Age Games, National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic, National Veterans Training-Exposure-Experience (TEE) Tournament, National Veterans Wheelchair Games and the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic.

For complete information about each event and registration information, visit the VA Adaptive Sports website:
www.va.gov/adaptivesports/.



Volunteer Caregiver Giving Much Needed Break to Veteran's Family

Story and Photo by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

Once a week, Carol Iriart-Rose travels to Haskell from her home in Fort Gibson to donate her time as a volunteer caregiver for World War II Veteran Hilliard Tucker, who served in the 101st Airborne and fought in the Battle of the Bulge.

For approximately four hours, Iriart-Rose visits with Tucker which gives his wife Mary and daughter Sharon Smith, the primary caregivers, the opportunity to run errands in town and buy groceries.

"Mainly, I'm just here to sit with him to give them some respite time," said Iriart-Rose. "When he talks, I listen and when he laughs, I laugh."

Even though Tucker is deaf and rarely speaks, Iriart-Rose said he knows she is there next to him.

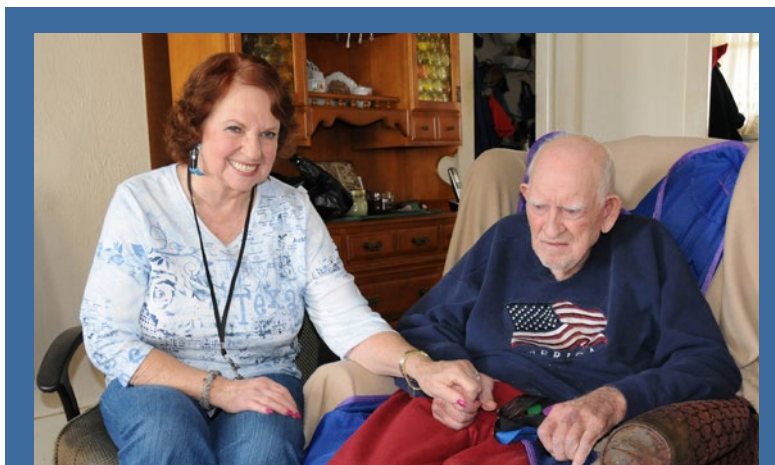
"Since he can't hear me, it's hard to have conversations," she said. "It took a little while, but I know he knows me and there are some days he says some words you can understand. I always go over and pat him on the hand when I get here and pat him on the hand when I leave. (One time) when Sharon and her mom came home, I patted him on the hand, he said 'not yet.'"

Iriart-Rose is the first volunteer caregiver in the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center's (JCMVAMC) new Volunteer Caregiver Support Program.

The program is designed to provide caregivers with a brief respite once a week while also providing companionship and compassionate support. The program's ultimate goal is to provide

Veterans with a high quality of life by allowing them to stay at home with their family as long as possible.

"More than half of caregivers report medium to high stress levels due to fulfilling all of the demands of being a caregiver – which can be a full time job," said Kellen Palmer, the Volunteer Caregiver Support Program Coordinator. "The program gives them a much needed break and provides the opportunity for the Veteran to have a friendly visitor and more socialization."



Carol Iriart-Rose (left), a volunteer caregiver, visits with World War II Veteran Hilliard Tucker. Iriart-Rose is the first volunteer caregiver in the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center's new Volunteer Caregiver Support Program.

Palmer said Iriart-Rose was an excellent candidate to become the program's first volunteer caregiver.

"Carol is a perfect example of a volunteer caregiver," he said. "She is easy to talk to with, very sympathetic, puts others before herself and has been very flexible with her schedule."

The Tucker family is very happy to have Iriart-Rose as a weekly visitor.

"Carol has been great," said Smith. "She's just so very pleasant and a happy

person. She fits right in. She's just been a good person to come do this."

Smith said the free program is a blessing for her family.

"Otherwise, we'd be paying out-of-pocket for somebody to come or we would be looking for an agency," said Smith. "I haven't been able to find anything that helps in that way, so it's been really a great thing for us."

Iriart-Rose, who is also an Army Veteran and served from 1957-1958, said she enjoys volunteering and encourages other to donate their time as a volunteer caregiver.

"What you get back is much more than what you give," said Iriart-Rose. "My father always taught me that we give back, always leave a soft foot print and live by the golden rule to help others. Everybody is going to need it sometime."

More Information

If you are interested in serving our Veterans as a volunteer caregiver, please contact Kellen Palmer at 918-577-3236. Interested volunteers must be 18 years of age and will need to complete caregiver support training.

The volunteer will visit the homebound Veteran once or twice a week for a few hours and will interact with the Veteran by playing games, working on craft projects, listening to music, reading aloud, watching movies and many other activities depending on the Veteran's condition. ★



Honoring the Veterans We Serve – World War II Veteran Bill Juraschek

Story and Photo by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

thing. He quickly put aside any thoughts of a baseball career.

“I knew I was going to be drafted,” said Juraschek, who receives his health care from the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center.

Juraschek figured he only had two options at that time – join a branch of service or get drafted into the Army.

“I didn’t want to be in the Army,” he laughed.

So at the age of 19, he volunteered to serve in the Navy. After completing training to become a naval officer, he was sent to flight school.

“I never flew a plane in my life,” said Juraschek with a laugh.

After earning his aviator wings, the Navy shipped Lt.j.g. Juraschek off to the South Pacific to fight the Japanese.

Assigned to the Scouting Squadron (VS) 66, Juraschek flew the Douglas SBD Dauntless, a dive bomber, and the Grumman TBF Avenger, a torpedo bomber.

Prior to the U.S. military invasion of Japanese occupied territory, the U.S. Navy would have to first attack the Japanese armada that dominated the Pacific. Scouting Squadron (VS) 66 and many other squadrons took the war to the Japanese fleet and sunk as many ships as possible.

On one bombing mission, Juraschek was flying a TBF Avenger and was about to release his torpedoes when his windshield became covered in oil.

“We went on a torpedo run and I was probably a quarter mile from the side of a Japanese ship and all of a sudden the prop just stopped,” said Juraschek. “A bullet may have hit that prop. A prop is oil pressure fed and it broke the oil pressure, because the oil was thrown out all over the plane. I couldn’t see.”

Juraschek turned his plane out to sea and was forced to crash land into the water.

In high school, World War II Veteran Bill Juraschek was a promising baseball prospect in the state of Illinois.

Prior to his senior year at Calumet High School in Chicago, Juraschek helped lead his summer baseball team to the Illinois State American Legion Championship game.

Baseball scouts from the St. Louis Cardinals took notice and Juraschek signed on to play baseball in the Cardinal’s farm system.

During the fall of his senior year, the Cardinals told Juraschek to report to St. Louis for a training school. But his mother wouldn’t let him go.

“I would have had to quit school if I was going to go,” said Juraschek, who is 91 years old. “(My mother) said, ‘you’re going to finish high school and then you can go.’”

But the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor changed every-



World War II Veteran Bill Juraschek

“I was at a low altitude and I had the canopy open, because you never fly with it closed,” said Juraschek. “If you did go in (the water) and it jammed, you wouldn’t get out. You want to be able to get out of the plane.”

After drifting in the open Pacific for several hours, a Navy plane spotted him and then a nearby ship picked him up.

“That plane is in the bottom of the ocean today,” he said.

Juraschek said only two things scared him during the war

– being captured by the Japanese or being lost at sea.

“I was alone,” said Juraschek with a pause. “It was six hours before I got picked up, but that’s ok. That’s alright.”

After young Americans such as Juraschek were able to weaken the Japanese fleet, the U.S. military and Scouting Squadron (VS) 66 turned its attention to taking Japanese-held islands.

A bullet may have hit that prop ... because the oil was thrown out all over the plane. I couldn’t see. That plane is in the bottom of the ocean today.

“Each one of those islands had airstrips,” said Juraschek. “We needed air supremacy, so we were bombing them a lot before the invasions.”

During November 1943, he helped attack the more than 4,500 Japanese soldiers who occupied Tarawa Island. As U.S. Marines came ashore and fought the Japanese, he also provided air support.

“When the five days were over, only 17 (Japanese) were left,” he said.

Juraschek also took part in several other invasions of Japanese-held islands including Gilbert, Makin and Marshall Islands.

Throughout the war, he flew 297 missions and survived 123 combat missions. But most of his squadron was not as lucky.



World War II Victory Medal

The World War II Victory Medal was awarded to all members of the Armed Forces who served at least one day of honorable, active federal service

between December 7, 1941 and December 31, 1946, inclusive.



Distinguished Flying Cross

The Distinguished Flying Cross is awarded to any officer or enlisted man of the Armed Forces of the United States who has distinguished themselves in actual combat

in support of operations by heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in an aerial flight, subsequent to November 11, 1918.



Air Medal

The Air Medal is awarded to anyone, while serving in any capacity in or with the Armed Forces of the United States, who has distinguished themselves by meritorious

achievement while participating in aerial flight.



During World War II, Juraschek flew the Douglas SBD Dauntless, a dive bomber, and the Grumman TBF Avenger (pictured), a torpedo bomber.

Photo by David Grech aka AirshowDave. © 2011-2013 AirshowDave.

Of the original 48 pilots of Scouting Squadron (VS) 66, only 18 lived to the end of the war.

After serving in combat, the Navy transferred Juraschek to Pensacola, Fla., where he served as a naval flight instructor. Given the choice of serving in combat or flying with a rookie pilot, Juraschek said he would have chosen combat.

“I felt I was safer in the fleet than instructing a novice pilot,” he said with a laugh. “He doesn’t know what he’s doing. I didn’t like that at all. I really didn’t.”

Juraschek served a total of 17 years in the Navy, including nearly 12 years in the active naval reserves. During the Korean War, he was recalled to active duty for two years and served on a six-month Arctic Expedition in the North Pole, as well as six months in Europe aboard the USS Baltimore.

“That was the best two years of my life,” said Juraschek, who retired from the Navy as a Lt. Commander.

For his military service, Juraschek was awarded 22 medals including the Navy Air Medal and Distinguished Flying Cross.

Today, Juraschek lives in Tahlequah with his wife of 68 years, Beatrice, who was his high school sweetheart in Chicago.

During World War II, he said he wrote to her almost every day.

“I hardly missed a day,” said Juraschek. “I really had it bad. I really loved that gal and I still do.” ★

Bill Juraschek in a Douglas SDB Dauntless during World War II.



Fort Gibson National Cemetery Honors 16 Veterans

Story & Photos by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

On March 6, Fort Gibson National Cemetery held a “Moment of Remembrance” memorial service for 16 Veterans who were recently interred but no family were present to attend a service for them.

Among the Veterans honored were seven from World War II, two from the Korean War, and five from the Vietnam War.

Dozens of people, including cemetery employees, attended the service which was held with full military honors.

“For some reason or another, the families had chosen not to do a service,” said Bill Rhoades, cemetery director. “For every Veteran that we have come in, we play taps at the shelter before we bury them. But this gives us another opportunity to pay them the respect that they deserve.”

Forrest Kirk, a chaplain at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center, officiated the service, the Haskell and Muskogee American Legions provided the rifle salute, while the Oklahoma National Guard folded and presented the burial flag to Rhoades, who accepted the flag on behalf of the cemetery.

The flag will be displayed during the Avenue of Flags, which are flown inside the entrance of the cemetery on special days of significance such as



A soldier from the Oklahoma Army National Guard salutes during the playing of Taps.

An Oklahoma Army National Guard soldier presents the burial flag to Fort Gibson National Cemetery Director Bill Rhoades, who accepted the flag on behalf of the cemetery.

Memorial Day, the 4th of July and Veterans Day.

Kirk said he was happy that so many people chose to attend the service.

“All the seats were full,” said Kirk, a Navy Veteran. “I think it was quite a show of support for people who have stepped up to the plate and done their best for us. That to me was more exciting than everything else. That shows that some still care.”

Navy Veteran Bill Lockard and his wife Deanna were among the crowd who attended the service. The couple drove around 90 minutes from their home in Oologah to honor Veterans they did not personally know or had ever met.

“These guys are like family,” said Bill Lockard. “They didn’t have family to show up for their funeral, but we’re here and they won’t be forgotten.”

Deanna Lockard said she was honored to be at the cemetery for the service.

“We’re all family,” said Deanna Lockard. “They (served) so that we could be free. It was a blessing to come down here and be part of their family and funeral.”

Army Veteran Zolla Brooks, who lives in Muskogee, also attended the service and said she wanted to honor the Veterans.

“They didn’t have any family and everyone should have someone,” said Brooks, who is a Desert Storm Veteran. “We’re all brothers and sisters no matter what. We’re all the same. I commend them for their service.”

The cemetery will begin having a “Moment of Remembrance” memorial service on a monthly basis. For more information, please contact the cemetery at (918) 478-2334. ★



The Haskell and Muskogee American Legions provided the rifle salute during the “Moment of Remembrance” memorial service.




A member of the Oklahoma American Legion plays Taps.



Navy Veteran Bill Lockard and his wife Deanna drove around 90 miles to attend the memorial service for Veterans.



VA Social Worker Audry Haldaman holds her Lifetime Achievement Award in Social Work.

 **N A S W**
National Association of Social Workers
Oklahoma Chapter

recognizes with admiration
and appreciation

Audry E. Haldaman

Lifetime Achievement Award

2013

VA Social Worker Receives Lifetime Achievement Award in Social Work

Story by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist | Photo by Christopher Beshears, Visual Information Specialist

On March 25, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Oklahoma Chapter presented Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JCMVAMC) social worker Audry Haldaman, LCSW, ACSW, with the highest honor they can give - the Lifetime Achievement Award in Social Work.

Haldaman, who has worked in social work for almost 42 years, accepted the award during the organizations' annual conference in Norman, Okla. and was also asked to give an acceptance speech.

Haldaman said she was overwhelmed to receive the award.

"It's a humbling experience to be recognized by your peers," she said. "It's been a very rewarding career for me. I'm not ready to retire. I love working with people."

Since 2010, Haldaman has worked for the JCMVAMC Mental Health Intensive Case Management-Extended-Range program, providing frequent case management involving home visits to increase the quality of life and community involvement of Veterans with serious mental illness.

Before joining JCMVAMC, Haldaman worked for the Oklahoma Department of Human Services in Woods County, Okla. from 1972 to 1979, the Cooperative Education Project from 1979 to 2000 serving the special education needs of preschoolers in Northwest Oklahoma, operated a private practice in social work in Alva and Woodward, Okla. from 1980 to 2008 and worked for the U.S. Army in Ansbach, Germany from 2008 to 2010.

I hope when I die that I can genuinely say that I've given back more than I've taken from this old world.

Throughout her career, she has specialized in providing treatment and prevention services for adults and children who have experienced trauma, child abuse and neglect.

Her work to help others has not gone unnoticed. Haldaman received the Oklahoma Social Worker of the Year award from NASW in 1988, the

American Business Clubs Therapist of the Year in 1997 and was inducted into the Social Work Hall of Fame at the University of Oklahoma for Clinical Practice in 1999.

Haldaman credits her mother for teaching her values that has made her successful in her career.

"My mother was a very giving and loving person," said Haldaman. "She taught us a good work ethic and to help others in need. I hope when I die that I can genuinely say that I've given back more than I've taken from this old world."

Haldaman has excellent advice to offer social workers who are just beginning their career.

"If you can't help them, don't hurt them," she said. "Use the best skills you have to do the very best job you can, use evidence-based treatment and continue to enhance your skills through training. Regardless of the situation, be kind to everyone. People are struggling with things we don't understand. It's through our kindness that they begin to trust us and it is in the process of helping others that we find our reward." ★

Being Active Benefits Us Physically and Mentally

By Brenda Priegel RN, M.S.

With spring whispering invitations to play outside, many of us begin to contemplate increasing our activity level. Longer days accompanied by warm sunshine and gentle breezes tempt us to step outside more. Taking a walk or riding a bike outside provides us with the opportunity to see the blooming flowers and hear the birds singing.

Being active benefits us physically and mentally as well. As we ponder increasing our activity level, let's review the benefits that come from being more physically active.

Benefits include:

- Increased energy
- Strengthened immune system
- Lower incidence of high blood pressure
- Reduced risk of heart attack
- Reduced cholesterol level
- Reduced stress and depression

As we begin to plan an increase in physical activity, we need to be aware of a few key points. First, if you have any health conditions (heart disease, diabetes, lung disease, etc.) consult with your physician first to map out a plan that best meets your needs.

Second, start slow and gradually increase to-

wards your activity level goal. Many times, people start out at the goal level and become discouraged or may even succumb to an injury. Third, choose an activity that you find enjoyable and fits your lifestyle.

The Center for Disease control recommends that adults aim for 2 ½ hours every week of moderate cardiovascular activity (30 minutes a day for five days) and two days every week of strength training.

Suggestions for cardiovascular activity include:

- Walking at a brisk pace
- Riding a bike
- Pushing a lawn mower
- Water aerobics
- Hiking local trails

Suggestions for strength training include:

- Yoga
- Lifting small hand weights
- Push ups
- Sit ups
- Gardening

Beginning an activity program after a long winter of inactivity may be daunting, but the benefits far outweigh the excuses not to begin. Just remember, "An object in motion tends to stay in motion."

As I write this, the sun is shining through my window calling me to come out and play. I know what I'll be doing this afternoon, what about you? ★



Are You a Responsible Drinker?

A message from the JCMVAMC Health Promotion & Disease Prevention Program

If you choose to drink alcohol, drink in moderation (women no more than 1 drink a day; men no more than 2 drinks a day). Avoid “binge drinking.” If you’re concerned about your drinking, talk to your VA health care team about getting help.

What is one drink?

- 12 oz. regular beer
- 8-9 oz. malt liquor
- 5 oz. table wine
- 1.5 oz. 80-proof hard liquor.

What is binge drinking?

- More than 3 drinks on one occasion for women and adults over age 65
- More than 4 drinks on one occasion for men.
- Remember, on average, women should have no more than one drink a day (7 drinks per week) and men should have no more than 2 drinks a day (14 drinks per week). For many adults, drinking small amounts of alcohol does not cause serious health problems. Too much alcohol use or binge drinking can lead to higher risk of health problems, such as liver damage or injuries.

Who should not drink alcohol at all?

- Children and teenagers
- People of any age who cannot limit their drinking to the recommended levels
- Women who are pregnant or who plan to become pregnant
- People who plan to drive, operate machines, or take part in other activities that require attention, skill, or coordination
- People taking certain medications that interact with alcohol
- People with certain medical conditions
- People recovering from alcohol dependence (alcoholism)

Alcohol dependence can be treated. Effective treatments include individual counseling, group treatments, medications to reduce craving or prevent relapse, and inpatient or residential treatment. Talk to your VA health care team about the resources VA has that can help. ★



Chaplain James Durham played a leading role in developing the new Chaplain's Channel.

New Chaplain's Channel

Story & Photo by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

Hospitalized Veterans who are receiving care as inpatients at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (JC-MVAMC) now have a new programming option on the hospital's closed circuit television system.

On March 18, the medical center began the "Chaplain's Channel," which features a daily devotional led by a Chaplain at 8 a.m., live video of the 9:30 a.m. Sunday service in the hospital chapel, family friendly movies and relaxing music videos.

The Chaplain's Channel can be found on Channel 4 and will be operated by the Chaplain Service Monday through Friday and on Sunday's from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The new channel was created due to feedback from inpatients who have often requested relaxing music cd's that they could play in their hospital room. In the past, the Chaplain Service has provided cd players and cd's to inpatients upon request.

Now, inpatients can tune to Channel 4 to listen to tranquil music during the daytime.

Chaplain James Durham, who played a leading role in developing the new channel, said studies demonstrate that relaxing music is very beneficial for inpatients and can even help the healing process. Durham also said the channel will provide an alternative to regular television programming for inpatients who wish to take advantage of it.

"Primarily, it's going to be a place of relaxation and refuge," said Durham. "Patients seem to get well quicker because they're more relaxed. They're not as anxious as when they're watching sports or standard programming. Everybody seems to be a whole lot more relaxed."

Along with airing on the inpatient television system, the Chaplain's Channel will also be shown in the Chapel. ★

Non-Profit Donates Tricycles

Story & Photo by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

National AMBUCS, Inc. donated two AmTryke therapeutic tricycles to the Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Service on March 26, which will be used by our Veterans as a form of recreation and physical therapy.

National AMBUCS, Inc. is non-profit organization with approximately 140 volunteer chapters in 30 states. Their mission is to create mobility and independence for people with disabilities.

Kent Clingenpeel, the President of AMBUCS, Inc., personally presented the AmTrykes to the medical center and said the donation was made possible through the organization's fundraising efforts.

"Our whole goal is to help people who are disabled, so that's what we do as an organization," said Clingenpeel. "We believe that our Veterans should have every opportunity to be engaged in the active lifestyle they had prior to their disability."

Last year, AMBUCS donated two AmTryke therapeutic tricycles to the Oklahoma City VA Medical Center and Clingenpeel said the organization hopes to donate more therapeutic tricycles to as many VA Medical Centers as possible. ★



Kent Clingenpeel, (right) National President of AMBUCS, Inc., presents two AmTrykes to the medical center on March 26.



Miss Cherokee Christy Kingfisher (left) and Junior Miss Cherokee Julie Thornton visit with Army Veteran Carlton Bullard on March 21.

Miss Cherokee and Junior Miss Cherokee Visit Veteran Patients

Story & Photo by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

Miss Cherokee Christy Kingfisher and Junior Miss Cherokee Julie Thornton visited Veteran patients at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center on March 21 to thank them for their service.

For more than 50 years, Miss Cherokee has served as a cultural icon and a goodwill ambassador on the Cherokee Nation's behalf. The Junior Miss Cherokee also acts as a goodwill ambassador for the tribe promoting the government, language, history and traditions of the Cherokee people.

Among the Veterans, the two ambassadors visited was Army Veteran Carlton Bullard, who is recovering from a recent surgery. Bullard said he was grateful that Kingfisher and Thornton briefly visited with him.

"I don't get very many visitors and I appreciate them stopping in," said Bullard. "They're giving up their time to come around and see Veterans and I appreciate that."

Thornton, who is a senior at Hilddale High School in Muskogee, said she enjoyed talking with Veterans and listening to their stories.

"I loved it," said Thornton. "I enjoy seeing the Veterans and talking to them and just trying to make their day a little bit better."

Kingfisher is a freshman at Northeastern State University and is a pre-medical major. Thornton also plans to attend Northeastern State University and major in speech pathology and Cherokee Language. ★

Muskogee Civitan Club Visits Veterans

Story & Photo by Nathan Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist

On March 19, the Muskogee Civitan Club visited inpatients at the Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center to thank Veterans for their service while also handing out comfort items such as toothbrushes, combs, pens and pads of paper.

The local group, which has existed in Muskogee for more than 54 years, visits Veterans at the medical center on an annual basis.

"We're here to honor the Veterans," said Dr. Tom Honea, a retired anesthesiologist and Civitan member. "We know we're indebted to them and we're just trying to repay that in a small way."

Honea said many of the items the club passed out to Veterans were purchased by the club and also donated by local banks, dentists and the OU Alumni Association.

"It's a community effort," said Honea. "We try to get other organizations involved in what we do."

Muskogee Civitan Club member Kay Borovetz, who has visited Veterans at the hospital for the past three years, said she looks forward to the annual visit.

"I love seeing the people, the patients, and listening to them," said Borovetz. "They tell you where they've been and about their service. I think it's a wonderful thing. I also love seeing all the changes that you've made. It's exceptional. The facility is really good."

According to the club's website, the organization conducts local community-service projects that service the disabled, elderly, teens, Veterans, families in need, community encouragement and those needing assistance.

The club also raises funds for the Civitan International Research Center in Birmingham, Ala. that specializes in developmental diseases such as: Alzheimer's, autism, Down syndrome and muscular dystrophy. ★

For more information about the Muskogee Civitan Club, please contact Betty Jean Honea at 918-682-3947.



Muskogee Civitan Club members Winnie Bowman (left) and Dr. Tom Honea (right) give a bag of comfort items to Vietnam Veteran Tom Wilson on March 19.

Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center Calendar

Cooking Class

We offer a cooking education program for enrolled Veterans, which will provide hands-on experience and help Veterans become more independent and responsible for their nutritional care.



Muskogee

Location: Jack C. Montgomery VAMC Auditorium

Time: Wednesday's, excluding federal holidays, at 9 a.m.

Contact: Gregory Thomas, RD, at 918-577-3287, to register for this class.



MOVE! Introduction Class

MOVE! is VA's national weight management program designed to help Veterans lose weight, keep it off and improve their health. This introduction class will provide information about the MOVE! program.

Muskogee

Location: Jack C. Montgomery VAMC Patient Education Room

Time: Monday's, excluding federal holidays, at 1 p.m.

Contact: Gregory Thomas, RD, at 918-577-3287

Tulsa

Location: Ernest Childers VA Outpatient Clinic Sooner Room

Time: Monday's (except the 4th Monday), excluding federal holidays, at 1 p.m.

Contact: Melinda Smiley, RD/LD, 918-628-2509

MOVE! Group Class

Join us each week to improve your eating, exercise and behavior habits.



Muskogee

Location: Jack C. Montgomery VAMC Auditorium

Time: Wednesday's, excluding federal holidays, from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. and 3 to 4 pm

Contact: Gregory Thomas, RD, at 918-577-3287

Tulsa

Location: Ernest Childers VA Outpatient Clinic Boomer/Sooner Room

Time: Tuesday's, excluding federal holidays, at 10 a.m. or 1 p.m.

Contact: Melinda Smiley, RD/LD, 918-628-2509

Veterans Open Art Studio/Writing Workshop

We offer an Open Art Studio and Writing Workshop to give Veterans an opportunity to create art or write and socialize with other Veterans. Veterans can bring their own art to work on or use art kits that were donated to the medical center by Help Hospitalized Veterans.

Muskogee

Location: Jack C. Montgomery VAMC Auditorium

Time: Monday's, excluding federal holidays, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Contact: Deborah Moreno - 918-577-4014.



Lipid Education

Learn how to improve your heart health through lifestyle changes.

Tulsa

Location: Ernest Childers VA Outpatient Clinic Sooner Room

Time: First and Third Thursday, excluding federal holidays, at 2 p.m.

Contact: Melinda Smiley, RD/LD, 918-628-2509

Diabetic/Pre-Diabetic Group Education

Learn survival skills for living with Diabetes and improving eating habits to reduce risks.

Tulsa

Location: Ernest Childers VA Outpatient Clinic

Time: Monday's, excluding federal holidays, at 10 a.m. in the Sooner Room

Contact: Melinda Smiley, RD/LD, 918-628-2509





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The Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center and Hartshorne, Tulsa and Vinita VA Outpatient Clinics served approximately 37,000 Veterans from a 25-county area in Eastern Oklahoma in 2012.



Jack. C. Montgomery VA Medical Center (Muskogee)
918-577-3000 or toll free at 1-888-397-8387



Jack C. Montgomery East (Muskogee)
918-577-3699



Behavioral Medicine Service Clinic (Tulsa)
918-610-2000



Ernest Childers VA Outpatient Clinic (Tulsa)
918-628-2500
or toll free at 1-888-398-8387



Hartshorne VA Outpatient Clinic
888-878-1598



Vinita VA Outpatient Clinic
918-713-5400

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